WATCH THIS FACE
ANDY FROST
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
SIMON AMOR
FANS EYE VIEW
DETAILS OF OUR
XMAS HOSPITALITY

vs London Irish
ZURICH PREMIERSHIP FIXTURE
SATURDAY 30TH NOVEMBER 2002
KICK-OFF 3.00PM
NIGEL’S NOTES...

Nigel Melville
Director of Rugby

It gives me great pleasure to welcome London Irish Players, Management and Supporters to Kingsholm for this afternoon’s Zurich Premiership action.

Last weekend both teams faced tough challenges: London Irish beat Leicester whilst Gloucester beat a very competitive Leeds Tykes. The result at Madejski Stadium was particularly pleasing for the London Irish team, who effectively climbed off the bottom of the table. The result also served to remind us that this year’s Zurich Premiership programme is probably as competitive as it has ever been.

When today’s teams met just a couple of weeks ago the result went Gloucester’s way, it was a tough, physical game played in the right spirit, we expect today’s game to follow a similar trend.

Last week’s game against Leeds was as tough as we expected, Leeds learnt a lot of lessons last season, they are now a tough side to turn over, they may not be flash, but they work hard and proved difficult to beat.

One of last weekend’s highlights was the return of so many Gloucester legends to Kingsholm to play for the Cherry Pickers side. The game against the Czech National team was in support of a very worthy cause: your support was appreciated by everyone. I personally believe that former players have a role to play in the future of the Club; I am keen to involve them in the playing side of the Club – they still have so much to offer.

"THE LESSON WAS SIMPLE, GET THE BASICS RIGHT AND RUGBY IS A WONDERFUL GAME TO PLAY AND WATCH."

Talking of future plans it was a great pleasure to welcome the New Zealand U21 Youth team to Kingsholm on Tuesday night. It is important that our young, developing players have a clear understanding of the levels that they are expected to achieve. The New Zealand team were a great barometer for our younger players. The lesson was simple, get the basics right and rugby is a wonderful game to play and watch. Thanks to everyone for supporting the teams. I am sure you enjoyed the quality of the player’s on show.

With the November internationals behind us, I must congratulate Clive Woodward and his England team on their three wins against high calibre Southern Hemisphere opposition. The gap may have closed but having had the pleasure of John Mitchell’s company this week, I can assure you that the All Black team will be firing on all cylinders come the World Cup – there is no room for complacency!

The loss of Trevor Woodman (Nedl) and James Simpson-Daniel (Glandular Fever) during this release period has been frustrating, both played significant roles in the November programme, they will surely be key members of the 2003 World Cup squad. As for our very own ‘raging bull’ Phil Vickery, he arrived back in great shape, ‘Man of the Match’ against South Africa and looking forward to getting back to business in the Premiership.

Thank you for your continued support, have a great afternoon and get behind your Cherry and White’s!
CAPTAIN'S CORNER

Jake Boer
Team Captain

We were very disappointed with what happened at Leicester two weeks ago, for everyone involved it was very hard to swallow, because we let ourselves down.

It is one thing if you lose to a team that has played better than you and beaten you well, but we just felt that we didn't play well enough and didn't perform on the night.

But we bounced back. We had a good week last week, we analysed the Leicester game on Monday and put it behind us. We had a good build up to the Leeds game and we came out and played much better than the previous week and we got a very good result.

Leeds were a spirited side, you don't get to second for nothing. They may have been disappointed with the way they played but we were happy with the result.

We did well in a lot of areas that we didn't the week before, but there is still a lot to work on. We had a lot of possession and territory and probably could have done better. But that is the case every week. We always identify areas where we are strong but always have other things to work on.

We have looked at the video and we had a lot more opportunities to come away with points and we didn't. We did have an eighteen point winning margin at the end but it is always disappointing to see that we had opportunities to score and we didn't take them. But that is the way the game is and that is why you work on taking those opportunities.

We identified that against Leicester our set piece was poor, if your set piece doesn't function, you are never going to get on to the front foot. Last week Dean Ryan focused a lot on our set piece just to give us more confidence and that was probably the biggest difference in the two recent games. Against Leeds our set piece was a lot better than it was at Leicester.

We have already played the Irish earlier this month and so obviously we know a lot about the Irish and what they do. I'm sure though that they will have a few things up their sleeve to change that and surprise us. It is certainly going to be a massive game because after beating Leicester, they are on the verge of something very big.

They will be in our faces all day long and it is important that we contain them and just play our own game.

"...WE ARE A CLUB THAT BELIEVES WE ARE GOING FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH BUT WE STILL HAVE A LOT OF THINGS TO DO..."

At the Madejski Stadium we earned a massive victory but if you go into any game in the Premiership with the attitude that because you have already beaten a team, the next game will be an easy game you are kidding yourself; you can't go into any game with that attitude. They will be on a high, but we are a Club that believes we are going from strength to strength. However, as we still have a lot of things to do so we will not be going into the game with this attitude at all. Instead it is as big a game as any other this year - its a massive game for us.
The ‘Watch This Face’ feature returns this week as we try to introduce the next wave of Gloucester talent...

Today’s subject will already be familiar to many of those in the ground as he has made quite an impression in the junior ranks for both Club and County and he has been a regular starter in the United side this season.

Appropriately he was included in the twenty-two man match day squad for the London Irish v Gloucester fixture at the McAlpine Stadium earlier this month and after joining the Club’s Academy programme in the summer, this meteoric rise is nothing short of Simpson-Daniel proportions.

Andy Frost, ‘Preppy’, is a product of the Rochford Rugby Club in Essex who he joined as a keen six year old. He progressed through the junior ranks under the watchful eye of Trevor Ashford and was spotted by the Gloucester Academy coaches after strong performances in the England Under-15 schools side.

Laterly, he was a pupil of the Greenwich school and this joined King John’s as a Bath hostel. Spotted by Bob Crooke, head of the Saracens Academy, he joined the Far East tour’s 1989 as part of their original Academy players.

At the end of last season, at the end of his school boy career both Saracens and Gloucester tabled offers but after careful consideration Frost decided to swap his tie for a claret and white short.

“My heart wasn’t really in it towards the end of the time with Saracens so from the point of view of development and confidence I needed a new start and a new challenge. One of the reasons I have been playing well recently is that I consciously thought I had to prove myself to get into the side”, said Frost.

Frost, it seems, has proved his point somewhat. In little over four months he has bridged the gap from schoolboy rugby to the fringe of the Gloucester 1st team squad with selection to the United and South England U21 development side. The progress he has made though has surprised no-one more than Frost himself. Who admits to having to pinch himself at times.

“It’s been so fast that I haven’t had chance to worry, everything has just flown. As a player I think I have come on leaps and bounds to where I was six months ago. And I hope it continues”.

“I was speaking to my dad on the phone the other day and I told him that I had been put up to the 1st team squad during the international release period and that I had been selected for South England U21. So he wasn’t too surprised, in fact he was delighted, but I still can’t believe it”, admits Frost.

His foray into the international set up was reasonably successful as the young Frost scored thirteen points in a 22-18 loss to France East. He kicked three penalties as well as converting his own try. It is a mark of the young man though that after this game he was more concerned with the two penalties he missed that could have won the game for his side.

Despite this promising international break through, Frost’s attentions are focused much closer to home. Before he starts to look for international recognition he is determined to climb higher up the Gloucester ladder.

Frost is never one to rest on his laurels and is constantly looking for the next challenge at the next step forward.

“From a United point of view, obviously it was a huge step up and I was very nervous during the games, which is probably why I didn’t really get involved as much as I normally do. I didn’t look for the ball and didn’t take the gaps I normally would. Now I have got a couple of games under my belt though I am more confident to do what I normally do”, admits Frost.

“Is no different to playing schoolboys or U21 in the United side you just concentrate on your game and do the things you have to do at the right time.”

Being in the right place at the right time certainly aided Frost’s progress to the 1st team squad. Nigel Melville promoted Ben Academy players to the 1st team training squad during the international release period. As Tom Barns dropped out of the squad for the trip to Hendley, Frost was drafted in at the eleventh hour.

“It has taken a number of weeks to break into this squad and have the confidence to step up and make the place”, admitted Frost.

“I found out on Saturday that I would be involved on Sunday, I had a suit panic to try and find the right outfit and they all said I was feeling very welcome. It was just the break in a team I had been in for weeks. I wasn’t nervous I was on the bench but it was the type of game we were warming up and all the Short Heads were shouting for us, and the cameramen were there. It’s an experience I want forget but I would have been nice to get on”.

Frost, who is also starting his final year of a Multi Media degree at Gloucestershire University, is one of the first boys to be enrolled in the Gloucester England Rugby Academy. Frost has admired the role that this new development has played in his progress.

“it’s a complete set up. We now have the guidance that may have been lacking before and it’s the little things that they help us out with. We are trying to juggle full time rugby with full time degree. It’s difficult to have two jobs. We are not typical students, our job is our rugby, and we need to take more time over that” said the young back.

As well as learning more about graphic designing and rugby, Frost has had to learn a life of skills to help support his dual role as a promising full-back or centre.

“It’s fair enough cooking beers on the stove or opening a can of soup, but we have so many demands on us physically that that isn’t enough. The social side of University does suffer a bit if you have got what it takes to be a rugby player, you can’t go out all the time”, he admits.

At the start of the season Frost sat himself the target of breaking into the 1st team squad in the next three years and prove to people that he was good enough to earn a contract. Physically he knows he has to develop but the way he is progressing already this year he may have to rethink these goals very soon.
Andy Frost, watch this face.
Gloucester U21 v Worcester

The Gloucester U21 side continued their fine form that saw them lying in second place in the U21 Zurich Premiership with an 8-0 win over local Midlands rivals Worcester last Friday night.

In appalling conditions the young Gloucester side took an early lead with an Andy Frost penalty and a try from second row Ben Hughes that owed much to the strength and power of the Gloucester forwards who drew him over the line.

After establishing this cushion so early in the game it was disappointing that Gloucester side were unable to add to this advantage and despite controlling much of the territory and possession they failed to capitalise on at least five good scoring opportunities.

However, despite this profligacy in attack the Gloucester side kept their heads sacred and on a night when the conditions could have acted as a definite leveller to ensure another four points away from home could be crucial come the end of the season.

Gloucester U21 v New Zealand U21

Gloucester supporters were treated to a mini international last night as a touring New Zealand youth development squad played at a Gloucester side comprising of many U21 players.

It was a throw back to a bygone age when international teams would play British Clubs as warm up games before rare internationals.

The New Zealand side made up of U21 Super 12 and provincial players ran out winners of this enthralling contest after taking an early lead and never letting their grip on the match slip.

Kingholm was treated to a pre-match Halftime, as the young Kiwis laid down the gauntlet to the Gloucester side.

Some saw it as an intimidating tactic, others as part and parcel of New Zealand rugby.

The Kiwis first converted try came after just eight minutes when full-back Heta, as he found himself on the third side of a ruck and the Gloucester defence failed to cover. Despite the touch judges not awarding the 2 points for the conversion, and over-rule by referee, Chris White, gave the touring side a 7-0 lead.

The Kiwis added a further try from centre Ginnel, and a penalty, before two more scores in quick succession from their ever-impressive full-back Moore, who touched down twice in a matter of minutes.

This was harsh on the home side who, led by 1st team players Chris Stuart-Smith and Josh Frisby, enjoyed their own flashes of brilliance, but Gloucester were unable to sustain the necessary pressure as the Kiwis were able to turn over the Gloucester ball almost at will. The main difference between the sides on the night was the control of the ball in contact areas. The Kiwis recycled well and stole a lot of good Gloucester ball.

Gloucester's first try came from recent 1st team squad member Rob Mokwe, the Manchester born hooker from Sedbergh school being driven over by his fellow forwards. Stuart-Smith converted.

Rejuvenated by this score the Gloucester side dominated the latter phases of the first half. Under pressure the Kiwi number eight was sin binned for killing the ball but for all their determination Gloucester could not make the most of their numerical advantage and ended the half 7-25 down.

Gloucester did score first in the second half, replacement Neil Hunter slotting a penalty. They added a further try after great hands from outside half Brad Davies, Davies put width on the ball and Shu Roberts was able to cut back inside to score. Hunter missed the conversion.

This parity was short lived however as the Kiwis second Moore added another try his hat trick score, which was converted, on the night after dummying his way through the Gloucester defence.

Stuart-Smith once again led the fight back but his many runs was left unrecognised as Gloucester lost the ball in contact once again.

New Zealand added their third and final try from winger Heath, after good work from centre Kellington. Moore converted to complete a very impressive performance.

Gloucester though had the final say as Josh Frisby's tries defence was rewarded with a try. Gloucester finished the match strongly but the damage had already been done.

Carl Douglas will take many positives out of this result but errors in contact cost his side dear.

2002/03
ZURICH U21 PREMIERSHIP

TEAM | P | W | D | L | B | PTS
---|---|---|---|---|---|-----
GLoucester | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 11
MUSSELWORTH | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 11
GEORGE STRING | 5 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 11
BRISTOL MAN | 10 | 6 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 27
LONDON IRISH | 10 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 27
SALE SHIR | 4 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 10
WARRINGTON SHIR | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 15
NEAR NEW | 5 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 15
WALSALL | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 14
LONDON IRISH | 5 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 14
SHIR | 6 | 1 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 17

WWW.GLOUCESTERRUGBYCLUB.COM
Jake Boer

Do you find that being Captain affects the way you approach games?

“I am fortunate that at this Club, I don’t have to change my approach to games. I approach it exactly the same, we have lots of guys at Gloucester that are natural leaders, guys that make decisions, and all I have to do is make key decisions, say yes or no to the referee or we will do this or that. I just oversee the game plan and make sure everything runs smoothly. I often consult with the other guys on the pitch to get ideas and as a captain you have to get thoughts of people around you, especially if you are in the pack”.

What makes a good captain?

“The most important thing is that you try to set a good example to the guys around you on and off the pitch. You have to get on with all the guys around and listen to their ideas. As captain I like to think I have the respect of the team and certainly I feel comfortable leading the team because the guys are behind me. But we have a lot of good players in the side and it is an honour to be able to captain this side. Coaches may see it differently but I think to be a captain you have to have natural ability to do it. You have to be comfortable making decisions and have a good knowledge of the game. But there is certainly a lot to learn as a captain. Some are very talkative, others lead by example”.

Boer on Strudwick

“I played with Ryan at Irish a few years ago and he is definitely got the qualities for a captain. He is a good man, he is a good team guy and a team player. He is a calm headed guy who makes good decisions and can lead by example. He plays consistently well and that is what a team needs, someone who is stable and that can make the decisions under pressure that can turn a game”.

How would you describe your style of leadership, autocratic or democratic?

“A bit of both really. You have to be able to say this is how we are going to do it because, as a captain, you have to be able to make key decisions that could turn a game. But I am open to any ideas on or off the pitch as to what we should do. There are some points in the game when you make a decision and have to back yourself, but lots of times you can consult with the guys around you”.

“”
The Premiership term book continues to be anything but a guide to the season. Gloucester and London Irish have both played Leicester in the last fortnight, and while Gloucester (top) lost at Welford Road, Irish (bottom at the start of the match) won in front of their own

Nigel Melville and Dean Ryan must, of course, take enormous credit for Gloucester's position, and chiselling out results like the one at the Madjeski three weeks ago. The game was tight at half time, but "the management" changed the tactics in the second half and

supporters. The Exiles victory will surely mean they arrive at Fortress Kingsholm with their morale higher than at any stage during the season so far.

Amazingly, this is the last home Premiership match of the year, a year in which Gloucester have so far won all their first team fixtures at Kingsholm, the latest coming against Leeds last Sunday. It was an extremely hard fought game, tough and uncompromising at times, and ruled mainly by the defences of the two teams, but Gloucester emerged with a functional victory to further consolidate a position I for one would have been mightily pleased with had I been offered it at the start of the season.

The side is showing a resilience and collective belief in their abilities that is difficult not to get excited about. To see the experienced Junior Paramore start a driving move in his own 22, and then score a try moments later in the opposite corner shows the team working ability that is driving the Gloucester team relentlessly forward. The coaching team of

totally subdued the Exiles. Despite 2 yellow cards which left Gloucester playing for a quarter of the game a man short, there was a real desire and an underlying collective confidence that even Irish's talismanic player-coach Brendan Venter couldn't shake. Let's hope more of this fare is on the menu for us at Kingsholm today.

You may remember that I kicked the odd goal for Gloucester in those long ago amateur days (and yes I have thought what I would be worth now!) but I would like to

convey my ongoing admiration for the goal kicking ability of Ludovic Merclier. He was brought to Gloucester by Philippe Saint-Andre, and I believe he was a critical signing. The similarities between the French passion for their rugby and the verve that we see here at Kingsholm are very close, and the 55 metre kick that Merclier slotted against Leeds just before half time last Saturday sent all the locals into raptures. Forward play continues to be revered, and there's still arguably a bigger challenge for a pushover try than for a structured move.
among the backs, but "Ludo" has become a
lynch-pin. His general game has improved
compared to when he was signed from
Aurillac, and I believe he is perhaps the man
Gloucester will want to keep fit more than
any other for the rest of the season.

would have proudly claimed by a centre. At
26, he is in the form of his life.

Don't forget our text line during and after the
game today. The foxy fans still out-number
the rugby supporters, and yet we have a real

"Phil Vickery was one of the real stars in
England's three wins."

Finally, a word today for returning skipper Phil
Vickery; he was one of the real stars in
England's three wins over New Zealand,
Australia and South Africa, and his run that
helped create one of the second half tries -
from memory the one finished by Richard Hill -
local and national success story here at
Kingsholm. Don't be shy - give your opinions
on 07786 20 14 13 - on what should
hopefully be another Cherry & White victory.

C'mon Glouce !

RADIO GLOUCESTERSHIRE
104.7 FM & 1413 AM

FIRST FOR COVERAGE OF THE CHERRY & WHITES
Earlier this week England Sevens Coach, Joe Lydon, announced his 12 man squad to take part in the first legs of the IRB Series 2002/03 season in Dubai on December 6th and 7th 2002 and George, South Africa on December 14th and 15th.

"These tournaments provide us with a great opportunity to see if we can build on the progress we made last year in one of the biggest and most prestigious legs of the IRB World Sevens Series. The management and players are really looking forward to it and we’re hoping that we receive the same high level of support we’ve received there in the past”, said Lydon.

Amongst the relative Zurich Premiership novices in the 12-man squad Lydon has asked Sevens specialist and captain of the victorious Hong Kong sevens squad from 2002, Simon Amor, to lead the side in the first two rounds of the sevens season.

Amor has yet to break into the Gloucester 1st team squad this season, but the scintillating skills he showed in last season’s IRB world sevens series as a Cambridge University undergraduate made him an automatic selection for this year’s squad.

Such is the average age of this largely untried squad that twenty-three year old Amor admits to feeling a bit like the senior pro. What this side lacks in experience however, they make up for with sheer pace.

"This is a fantastic squad, brimming with talent. They are quite young but they are ridiculously quick. We played against virtually the same British Army side that won the Middlesex sevens two seasons ago and took them apart in the trial match", said the Gloucester back.

With the young look to this England side Amor feels that the selectors have the perfect opportunity to fast track some of the players singled out for further international honours later in the season.

The Southern Hemisphere super powers have a good track record for identifying future stars and developing them in the shortened for of the game, Jonah Lomu and Christian Cullen are just two All Black World beaters that came to prominence in the New Zealand sevens side.

Last season recent Wallaby tourists Matt Rogers and Wendel Sailor were integral parts of the Australian sevens side and Ben Rusell a second half Springbok substitute against England also made a name for himself on the sevens circuit.

"In the Southern Hemisphere the big three all have big name players that came through the sevens circuit", agrees Amor.

"I think there are definitely players in this side that can go on to gain further international honours. I think the selectors have an opportunity to identify players with the potential to play not just sevens but fifteen-a-side and fast-track them into the A team or full side", he adds. >>
PLAYER PROFILE

Amor uses fellow Gloucester and sevens star James Simpson-Daniel as just one success story following his exploits in the Sevens side. Simpson-Daniel scored a match-winning hat-trick in Hong Kong for the Sevens squad and six months later was starring on his debut for the full England side in the Autumn international against New Zealand.

Amor himself is also keen to develop from someone considered a sevens specialist to a fully- fledged fifteen-a-side international. Like cricketers who get pigeonholed as one- day specialists, some never shake the stigma and never reach their potential as a full- test player.

Amor is very much a glass is half full type of person and doesn't let his sevens specialist tag worry him.

"I watched the tape of last week's game. In fifteen-a-side games, the wingers rarely make tackles and don't have to pass that much. Certainly they don't get into tackles. In Sevens there is nowhere to hide. You make two or three tackles a game, play full games a tournament and two tournaments in a fortnight. That is a lot of tackling. You have to pass and get involved in rucks and mauls. You have to be able to do everything. Some in this squad can't do it all but they will learn, they will certainly become better players," explains Amor.

Amor feels that part of his problem is that he has yet to find his best position. He has all the skills to play anywhere in a back line but sometimes a "jack of all trades" tag can sometimes mean they become a master of none.

"I don't have a problem with this situation. I sit on the bench but I can cover a host of positions for possibly the best squad in Europe. I am ambitious but also a realist and see the strength of the players in the squad ahead of me. Ludovici is one of the best kickers in the Premiership. He is a huge asset to this side and Comyns is nearly the best scrum half in the country. I can see why Nigel is playing them ahead of me\textsuperscript{,} says a very modest Amor.

Amor has though played in all of this year's United fixtures and has impressed immensely with displays at both back positions. His speed of hands and foot makes him a formidable opponent in the loose and he kicked some very good goals.

"Playing for the United was very enjoyable. Sevens develops your skills but my commitment is to Gloucester first and foremost. At the moment I can commit to the sevens circuit but as my involvement in the Zurich Premiership increases something may have to give\textsuperscript{.}" 

"I can understand why some players are frustrated at not playing but you have to weigh up the pros and cons. You may get a more regular game playing for another team or you might play less for the best team in the country\textsuperscript{.}" 

As for being the best Amor has high hopes for this present crop of sevens youngsters: England completed the IRB Series last season ranked in third place, their best ever finish in the competition. The squad won the Hong Kong tournament for the first time and were the Plate winners at the Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games.

Amor though feels that the current squad can go even better.

"I think we can win a few more tournaments this year and really push the All Blacks for the number one ranking spot\textsuperscript{.}" 

England face Canada, Wales and Zimbabwe in their pool group in the Dubai leg of the IRB Series.\textsuperscript{11}

ENGLAND SEVENS SQUAD

Simon Amor (Captain)
Gloucester
Matt Cameron
London Irish
Ben Collings
BBC Bradford
Richard Haughton
Solihull
Jonathan Hutton
London Irish
Rob Land
London Irish
Alessandro Land
Italy
Chris Maker
Sharks

Ryan Prunty
Saracens
Rob Russell
Bath
Paul Sampson
London Irish
Rob Thirlby
Bath

STAND BY
Paul Donovan
London Irish
Paul Hodgson
London Irish
Liga Morley
IRL Midlands
GLOUCESTER 28  
TRIES: Boer, Paramore, Todd  
CONVERSIONS: Mercier (2)  PENALTIES: Mercier (3)

LEEDS TYKES 10  
TRIES: Emmerson  
CONVERSIONS: Van Straaten  PENALTIES: Van Straaten
KINGSHOLM: SUNDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2002

CHERRY PICKERS 43
CZECH REPUBLIC 49

(C) Left: Cherry Pickers left to right
Richard Pascal, Eamonn Mann and
Malcolm Fowden.
(Top Right): Jon Smith.
(Middle Left): Cherry Pickers left to
right Simon Devenish, Pete Granville,
Peter Winterbon and Mark Roberts.
(Middle Right): Tony Commins.
(Bottom Left): Simon Murrell.
Fans Eye View

With Bob Fenton

Here we go then, the second of three home games in a row, and the second against London Irish in three weeks.

Having almost back-to-back home and away games kind of makes you wonder what the particular bright individuals who plan our fixtures are thinking when they sit down to draw them up.

That's not to say that they have not done a bit of a better job than previous seasons, but the concept of a home game one week, followed by an away game the week after, still seems to escape them. Is it really that difficult to work out? It's not as that hard if the boys in the round ball game can manage it, and we all know how mentally challenged they are...

The other thing the fixture schedulers fail to take into consideration is the expense involved in playing back-to-back home games before Christmas. Not the financial expense (though that's bad enough at around £250 a point times twenty but the prize to be paid by the constant drawing of pass-outs on the home front. In the run up to Christmas this means only one thing - having to do the Christmas shopping!

This is more than grown men can stand, especially when she who must be obeyed refuses to partake in the delights of doing it all via the internet. I mean, what is the difference between a PS2 game obtained from Amazon.com and the very same one obtained from Argos? Lots, apparently. Okay a quid or two, but for the pleasure of not leaving the house it's well worth the little bit of extra cash.

Pushing water uphill is an easier task than convincing her, though, so if you are looking for me on a Saturday morning, look for the glum-faced old being dragged around Toys 'R' Us or some other hell purporting to be a shop!

All this talk of Christmas though means that the time is right to start thinking about those less fortunate than ourselves (yes, Bath supporters, people in our own ranks who are clearly struggling for warm winter clothes).

I mean, of course, Kingdom's very own nearly cape, Ed Archer. I know Ed and he's a really good bloke, knows his stuff and is - with the exception of a couple of players - one of the longest serving people to be found on the staff at Castle Grim. What is clear, though, is that he is not being paid enough money.

How do we know this? - it's obvious: the poor bloke can't afford a pair of decent warm winter trousers. Weak in, week out he's there, whatever the weather, running around with kicking tees, bottles of water, kit bags etc. all in a pair of skinny jeans that look like they are relics from those days... almost skin-tight, things certain footballers used to wear in the late 70's.

Last week things were so bad it looked for a moment like he wasn't wearing any at all (well down ladies) under his jacket. Fortunately he was though, and his modesty spared.

You watch out for him today, it may well be freezing cold and you will be wrapped up in replica crested fleece top, warm coat and, most importantly, long trousers. Ed will be mannishly toting away in his little black jeans. So now I am officially launching 'Archer-Aid'. We all put out hands in our pockets for the Bath Rugby fund, now is the time to find a few coppers to send the poor lad down to Malton to get some decent trousers. Chin up Ed - we're here for you. (Oh if you see Ed today, Ed - I am now officially calling you!)
Talking of unsung heroes, a word must go to the Academy kids who run the little sessions on the pitch for kids from local schools each week. Chatting to my mate Steve while watching our respective juniors falling away for Nuccecco Under 8’s last Sunday morning, he told me that his lad’s school was one of the ones chosen.

Not only do the kids get to run around on the Kingsholm turf before kick off, they also get a visit from the Academy boys who run training sessions at their schools. Steve told me how excited his lad was, and how much of an impact the visit had had on them.

No doubt the Academy boys are obliged to do these sessions under the terms of their contracts, but they obviously enjoy it and this endorses the youngsters. Not only do ventures like these secure the supporters of tomorrow, they also inspire the youngsters to play the game. Well done boys, a great community venture.

And finally it’s time to report one of the greatest gags ever heard from the shed – and there have been many to choose from – and two of the greatest moments seen on the pitch. Both came during the Cherry Pickers match last Sunday.

Firstly as Stuart Barnes was saying “… and here comes a load more replacements for the Cherry Pickers…” a very loud voice yelled “Don’t worry Cherry Pickers – your hip replacements will be on soon!”

Towards the end of the game I think there were 23 players on the Cherry Pickers side (and well done Duncan Murray for trying to lower the age profile a bit). Getting the ball away to the wings had all the hallmarks of a pass the parcel game at a particularly demoted children’s party. Or did I miss something and was it another Children in Need style pass-the-rugby-ball event?

And the greatest moment has to be that scowl of the wing Nick Price stepping and firing a tap when play was miles away from him then – when the ball came towards him – handing the cigarette to the touch judge to go off and do his job.

Only at Kingsholm…
STUART BARNES WAS RIGHT!

The Bull certainly rumbled last Saturday, and I imagine few people would disagree with Stuart Barnes' decision to give Phil Vickery his Man of the Match award for his storming display for England against South Africa.

In announcing his decision, 'Benney' described it as a 'hilarious attempt to ingratiate myself with the Shed before our visit to Kingsholm tomorrow'. If that really was his play, then it didn't really work, bearing the reception he got as he walked past the Shed on the way to his commentary position for the Leeds game. It was all very good-natured, of course, and the jeers turned to cheers as he had enough nous to move to the crowd on his way past.

We're a bit hard on him sometimes, as we used to be on Nigel Stormer Smith in the old days. The difference is that Stuart knows the Kingsholm scene very well, indeed, having endured the slings and arrows of outrageous Sheephedwards on numerous occasions, as both player and commentator.

Oddly, Phil Vickery's magnum of champagne was still intact on Sunday. He's apparently saving it for a special occasion, although he's not saying what that is likely to be.

Did you notice, by the way, that some of Phil's most dangerous incursions into Springbok ranks took place after Andy Sommers's took the field? That might not be entirely coincidental: they do, after all, know each other's little foibles rather well, and probably don't even have to think to know where the other is likely to be on any given occasion. We mustn't forget 'Gummers' contribution, either. He did, after all, lend a couple of good conversions, and looked very much the part following a hard act such as Matt Dawson has been in the autumn series.

Well done both! It's just a crying shame that Trevor Woodman and James Simpson-Daniel weren't able to be part of the South African rout.

ABLE DEPUTIES

To have taken ten Premiership points while our England contingent was unavailable to us is a considerable achievement, and a great deal of credit for that must go to the able replacements we have in the front row. Romana grows into the role week by week, and what is there more to say about Andy Deacon? Many clubs would be pleased to have that pair as their first-choice prop combination every week.

No one should be surprised by 'Deeks' of course. What he lacks in youth he makes up for in experience and sheer low cunning. His pass to put Josh Drew over and open the try scoring in the Leeds game was sheer magic.

Don't hang up your boots yet, Andy. We'll need you over the World Cup period.
THE WORST LUCK IMAGINABLE

The news of James Simpson-Daniel’s illness reached me just after I had submitted my copy for the Leeds programme, which was a pity. However, it did mean that I’d be able to devote more time and space to the matter than I would otherwise have done.

The first thought is - what else can happen to the poor bloke? He missed his chance of a Championship winners medal last season through a freak foot injury sustained while playing for England against the Barbarians. That problem also kept him out of England’s highly successful tour of Argentina, where, knowing what we know now, we can confidently state he would have been a huge success.

He then makes his full England debut against the toughest imaginable opposition, New Zealand and Australia, where he stunned all impartial observers by making three (some would say four) tries. Then he goes and contracts glandular fever.

At least his earlier bad luck stemmed from a “proper” rugby injury, but to follow that up by catching a fairly unusual disease like this is the worst luck imaginable. That being so, I thought I should learn a bit more about it.

All I knew beforehand was that it is a highly debilitating disease which can take a lot of shaking off. Indeed, I know one chap who reckoned that it was a full year before he shook off the full effects of his dose of the ailment.

Fortunately, a little research revealed that that is an extreme case. As a supremely fit young athlete, James should be able to cope reasonably quickly. Indeed, it is a matter for amusement that he was able to play against Australia at all, having apparently started to suffer several days beforehand. Imagine what might have happened if he had been thoroughly fit!

Glandular fever, known medically as ‘infective mononucleosis’, is a viral disease, so antibiotics aren’t any use in combating it, although they might have a role to play in fighting any secondary infections which might arise as a result of the body’s natural resistance being lowered by the disease. Apparently, the virus can spread to virtually any gland in the body, causing general tiredness and a feeling of being ill without being able to pinpoint the cause.

Not nice at all. Rather like a very bad dose of flu. The only real treatment is rest and lots of it, until the body deals with the invading virus itself. The doctor I spoke to recommended staying indoors for four to six weeks before attempting to do anything very much.

All we can do is wish young James the best of luck, and implore him not to let his natural instincts tempt him into trying to come back too soon. He’ll have plenty more chances to stun the world with his wizardry.

Just one more thing. Apparently, glandular fever is often transmitted by mouth, and is therefore sometimes known as the “kissing disease”. Shocked? What have you been up to?

WHISKERLESS

I see that our old mate, Mike Price, Town crier of Tenbury and self-styled President of the West End Turnpikes Association has sacrificed his trademark sideburns and muttonchops in the cause of charity.

Well, at least the chap standing behind him will be able to see the game a bit more easily.
With a victory against the Springboks last weekend, England ensured that they enjoyed a very successful Autumn international series against the Southern Hemisphere’s Super Powers and saw them rocket to number one in the Zurich International league table.

In all, Gloucester provided six players to the thirty-man squad for the international series but while victory, Woodman, Simpson-Daniel and Gomarsall all featured at some point, youngsters James Forrester and Marcel Garvey will have to wait a little longer to make their debut on the World Stage.

Phil Vickery enhanced his reputation as one of the best tight head props in the game and Andy Gomarsall continued his rise to international prominence by winning his ninth international cap.

Trevor Woodman started his first full international for England whilst James Simpson-Daniel made a belated debut on the international scene. The performances of both players, before injury and illness robbed them of further glory, will surely guarantee their international future.

First up England had to withstand a fierce barrage from the All Blacks headed up by their nemesis, Jonah Lomu, and whilst the giant Kiwi winger scored twice, with the All Blacks adding two more tries from Doug Hautwll and scrum half Danny Lei, three tries from Moody, Cohen and Wilkinson, to add to the mercurial fly halves sixteen points with the boot were enough to win the day.

Next up came the World Champion Catholics. Stung by a loss to Ireland a week earlier, the Ausies were keen to end England’s autumn match unbeaten run at Twickenham. England binned the first half but after a twenty-five-point turnaround either side of half time, England were forced to play catch up rugby. Exceptional cool headedness from Jonny Wilkinson, in front of goal, and two-cap novice James Simpson-Daniel, whose slight of hand made the winning try for Ben Cohen, saw England home by the narrowest of margins 32-31.

The Springboks were the last Southern Hemisphere giant to be dispatched this autumn as a rampant England side rang tock on their way to their eighteenth consecutive victory at Twickenham’s luscious tur. A brace of tries from Will Greenwood, to add to another score from Cohen and a try a piece from Back, Hill and Dallaglio as well as a second half penalty try helped England to a record 53-03 score against the fourteen man Springboks.
ationals

Photo’s courtesy of Bruce Seabrook GPA, official Gloucester and England Photographer.
These pictures are available to buy on-line at www.gloucesterrugbyclub.com
GLOUCESTER V LONDON IRISH

GLOUCESTER’S NEXT THREE MATCHES

PERPIGNAN
Heroenen Cup
Sunday 8th Dec 2002
Kingsholm KO 1:15pm (eurosport)
Ticket Hotline: 0871 871 8781

PERPIGNAN
Heroenen Cup
Saturday 14th Dec 2002
Stade Aime Giral KO 3.00pm
On Sale At Kingsholm from Monday
25th November Tel: 0871 871 8781

LONDON WELSH OR EXETER
Proxigen Cup
Saturday 21st Dec 2002
Kingsholm KO 3.00pm
Ticket Hotline: 0871 871 8781

THIS WEEKEND’S FIXTURES

Friday 29 November 2002
Sharks vs Bath Rugby

Saturday 30 November 2002
Gloucester vs London Irish
NRC Harlequins vs Saracens
Leicester Tigers vs Northampton Saints

Sunday 1 December 2002
Leeds Tykes vs London Wasps
N’castle Falcons vs Bristol Shoguns

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